

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE PARK INCLUDES 473 ACRES OF BOTTOM-LAND HARDWOOD FOREST AND SWAMP JUST WEST OF THE FAST-GROWING HOUSTON METRO AREA. YOU WILL FIND GIANT COTTONWOOD TREES, THICK VINES, WHITE-TAIL DEER, BEAVER, FLATHEAD CATFISH AND MANY SPECIES OF BIRDS IN THE PARK'S FOREST AND RIVER HABITATS. PARK VISITORS ENJOY THE WILDLIFE AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING CAMPING AND HIKING OR BIKING OVER 5 MILES OF TRAILS. JUST BEYOND THE BIG CITY LIES A QUIET PLACE OF NATURAL BEAUTY RARELY FOUND IN SOUTHEAST TEXAS TODAY.



PARK INFORMATION

You are visiting a nature preserve as well as a recreation area. Help us protect the park's wildlife diversity and ensure your safety by observing park rules.

Stay on designated trails. Be sure your pets remain on a leash.

Call the park to schedule your school, scout, or youth group for programs of wildlife discovery.

The park offers at least two programs each weekend. Check with park headquarters for more information.

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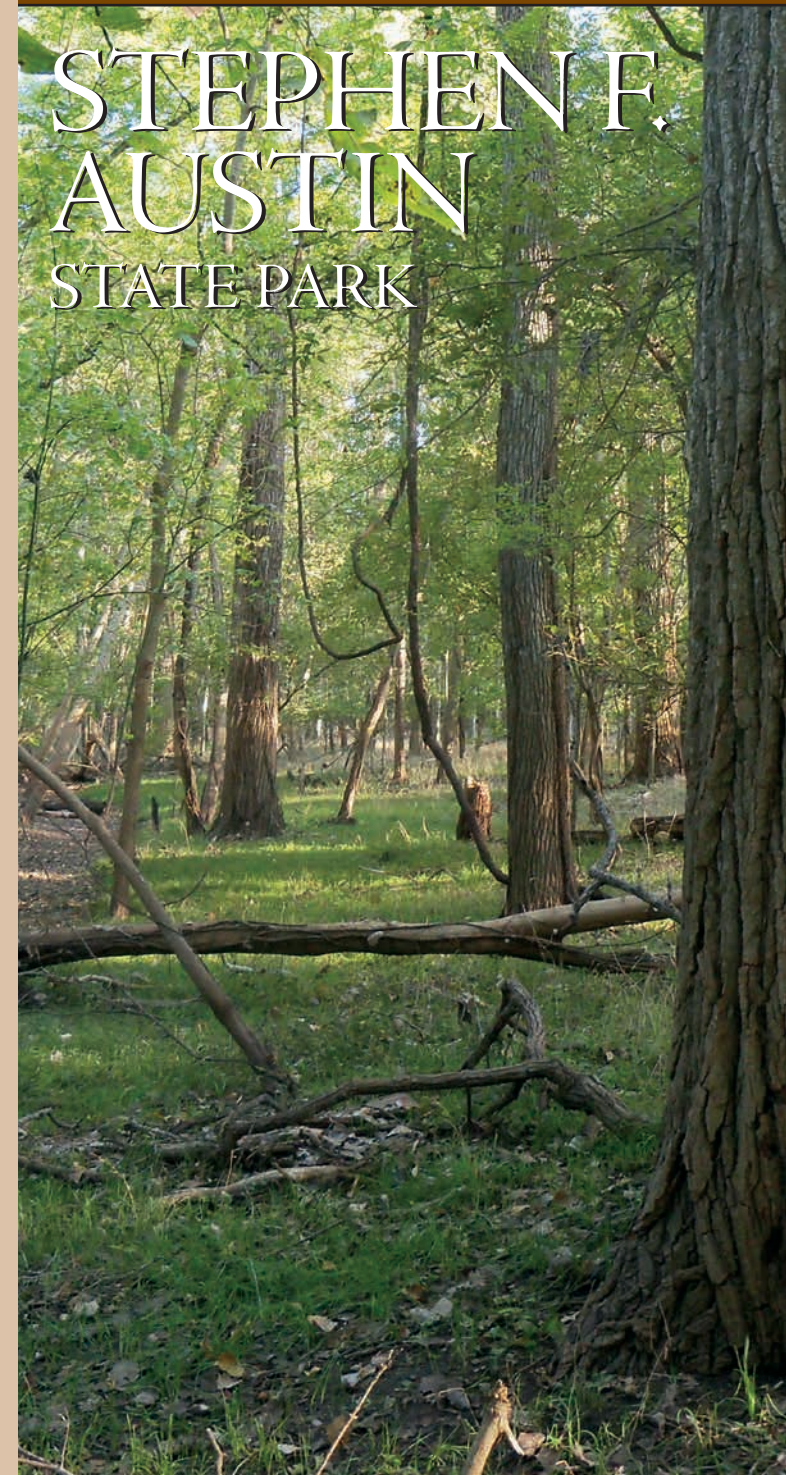
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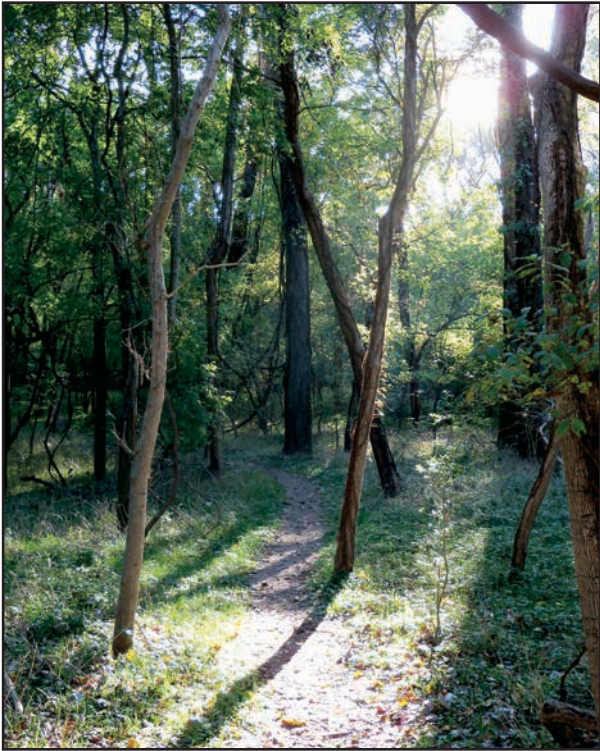
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Interpretive Guide to:

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE PARK





BOTTOMLAND FOREST

The bottomland forest's moist soil gives life to an array of plant and animal species different from those of the drier upland nearby. Towering cottonwood trees evoke the image of a waterfall as their leaves blow in a breeze. The sound of rushing water surrounds you as you stroll down the shady paths in this "lower level" of the park. The huge leaves of sycamores offer a much-needed respite from the sun on a hot summer day. Look closely and you can see evidence of flood succession, a process by which willows and cottonwoods take advantage of newly formed bare soil deposits created by high water. In these areas, a single species will have a short-lived dominance, quickly giving way to heartier species.

RECREATION



Recreational activities offered at Stephen F. Austin surprise many a first-time visitor. Camping at one of the 100 campsites brings you to a place of peace and natural beauty. Over 5 miles of well-maintained trails provide a way for hikers and cyclists to experience natural wonder first hand. Bird watchers will also delight at the numerous species using the park as a stop over for migration or nesting site for the season. Mississippi kites, prothonotary warblers, and red-shouldered hawks all call Stephen F. Austin home. Be sure to stay until dusk and listen for the barred owl, which asks, "Who cooks for you, who cooks for you all?"



THE BRAZOS RIVER

The Brazos River quietly meanders along the north edge of the park. Catfish and gar patrol the murky brown waters, as turtles sun themselves on the snags. Wading birds like the great egret prowl the shores for their next meal. Steep willow-lined banks reveal a river constantly shifting from side to side. Rivers and streams cut deeply on the outside of a bend, where the water rushes by. Then the water slows to deposit rich soil on the inside. The Brazos moves slowly most of the year, but sometimes surges into a torrent with rainstorms to the north and west.

